EXHIBIT OF PORTION OF A LIVE COLONY OF HONEY ANTS.

By J. Clark.

(Shown on 12th September, 1922.)

(*Camponotus* (*Myrmophyma*) *inflatus*, Lubb.)

The colony shown contained workers, both major and minor, semirepletes and repletes of the Australian Honey Ant described by Lubbock from specimens obtained from Adelaide, South Australia, in 1880. These ants are numerous in the inland districts of Western Australia, being recorded from Kalgoorlie northwards to Marble Bar. The specimens exhibited were collected and presented to me by Mr. Jas. Hickmer at Jigalong, N.W. Australia.

The habit of developing repletes is known to occur sporadically in at least six different genera of ants, namely, *Camponotus, Myrmecocystus, Melophorus, Leptomyrmex, Plagiolepis,* and *Prenolepis,* the first, third, and fourth containing the Australian species.

The geographical distribution of the various honey ants seems to point to drought as one of the most important factors in their development, for nearly all of these insects are confined to dry plains and deserts of Australia, South Africa, and North America.

The impulse to develop repletes is probably due to the brief and temporary abundance of liquid food (Honey-dew, gall secretions, etc.) in arid regions, and the long periods during which not only these substances, but also all insect food is unobtainable. The honey collected is stored in the living reservoirs for the purpose of tiding over such periods of scarcity.

Froggatt (Report Horn Exped. 1896) says the repletes are quite incapable of movement, but such is not the case with the Western Australian species, as even the largest repletes can slowly move about, but are quite helpless if laid on their sides or backs.

The natives, and many white people, too, are particularly fond of the honey stored in the ant. It is slightly sour in flavour, but not unpleasant.

Mr. Hickmer informs me that the natives near Jigalong call this ant *Cul-cha,* and a little further south it is called *Oo-ka-da.* In his notes he says: ". . . They are edible to the natives; the nests are underground, and go down two and a-half feet through several small cells to a larger lot of cells where the 'honey-bags' are; the natives handle them carefully, as they are very easily crushed. They are only found in certain spots in scrubby mulga; the small entrance holes on the surface are generally covered with dry leaves."